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97th plenary meeting
Thursday, 16 February 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. . . . . (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Quinlan (Australia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/66/668/Add.2)

The Acting President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/66/668/Add.2, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/66/668 and A/66/668/Add.1, the Marshall Islands has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should also like to inform members that, since the issuance of document A/66/668/Add.2, the Sudan and the Federated States of Micronesia have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This information will be reflected in document A/66/668/Add.3 to be issued at a later date.

Agenda item 34

Prevention of armed conflict

Draft resolution (A/66/L.36)

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that the debate on agenda item 34 and its sub-item (a) will take place at a later date to be announced.

I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As members of the Assembly know, the President of the General Assembly on Monday, 13 February, convened a plenary meeting (see A/66/PV.95) under item 64, entitled "Report of the Human Rights Council", based on what he called "the developments in Syria". At the time, we drew the attention of the President of the General Assembly and Member States to the fact that the convening of that meeting was in contravention of established practice and the provisions of resolution 65/281 on the review of the Human Rights Council (A/66/53/Add.2). We called in vain on the President of the General Assembly to obtain an independent legal opinion that would have enabled us to avoid establishing a serious precedent that might induce the General Assembly to commit an

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increasing number of breaches of the rules of procedure and violations of the provisions of its own resolutions.

At that meeting, it was announced that a draft resolution (A/66/L.36) would be presented regarding the situation in Syria. We find today, however, that this draft resolution is under another item of the agenda, namely item 34, entitled "Prevention of armed conflict" — a completely different item from that under which the previous meeting was held. We recall that some Western States said that the events in Syria should be debated under agenda item 36, "The situation in Middle East", either in the Security Council or in the General Assembly.

Based on what I have just said, it would seem clearly pathetic that the Syrian question should be addressed over the course of 10 days under three agenda items that are completely different from each other. This emphatically shows that Syria is being targeted in principle. There is no other reason for this confusion in terms of procedural issues and clear violations of the rules of procedure.

This confusion threatens the credibility of the General Assembly at a time when it is dealing with important issues pertinent to the sovereignty of Member States. My country understands the importance of upholding the transparency and credibility of the work of the General Assembly in terms of principle and not because we are talking about an issue linked to Syria. We would therefore ask the President to clearly explain these procedural issues before we move forward in order to ensure that the rules are clearly and accurately understood.

The Acting President: My understanding is that it is the practice of the General Assembly to convene a plenary meeting for the purpose of providing an opportunity to consider any proposal submitted by a member State or group of member States under any agenda item. The sponsors, of course, have submitted the draft resolution before us under item 34 (a), and I would propose that we proceed on that basis.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen on a point of order.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation was surprised by today's reference to Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations. This is a problem for us and I merely wished to inform the presidency of this.

The Acting President: That will be duly noted.

I now give the floor to the representative Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.36.

Mr. Mahmoud (Arab Republic of Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today's meeting is being held in the light of critical circumstances in a sister Arab State, where an unacceptable major escalation of acts of violence has been condemned by the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the international community, which have all demanded an immediate end thereto. On behalf of the Group of Arab States, we reiterate our absolute rejection of the use of violence against civilians, regardless of the justification. We demand that the Syrian Government heed and fulfil the demands of the Syrian Arab people.

Staunching the bloodshed and ending the suffering of the brotherly Syrian people is the top priority of the League of Arab States' current agenda. Many resolutions have been adopted thereon, the latest of which is the resolution adopted by the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States on 12 February.

The League today stresses the need for the immediate, full and faithful implementation of all the provisions of the Arab action plan, which is the sole and ideal way to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to freedom and democracy in a comprehensive, Syrian-led political process in an environment free from violence, fear, intimidation and extremism. We stress once again the primacy of the Arab solution under Arab auspices, our rejection of military intervention in Syria, and our commitment to preserving Syria's unity and territorial integrity.

In implementation of the resolution of the Council of the League of Arab States of 12 February, which mandates the League to submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly that reflects the Arab initiative and the other relevant resolutions of the League, the Group of Arab States has introduced draft resolution A/66/L.36 on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict". The League has taken into consideration the link between the draft resolution and sub-item (a) of the agenda item, "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution". We believe that this principle is at the very core of the League's initiative, which is fundamentally aimed at finding a peaceful settlement to the Syrian conflict.

The draft resolution takes into consideration all the pillars of the peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis, as reflected in the Arab action plan of 2 November 2011, the resolution adopted by the Ministerial Council of the League on 22 January, and its latest resolution of 12 February. These Arab initiatives and efforts enjoy unprecedented international acceptance and recognition. The draft resolution is sponsored by some 70 States Members of the United Nations. The League of Arab States and all sponsors hope that it will be adopted by consensus today, thereby demonstrating that the international community speaks with one voice, reflecting the gravity of developments in Syria, and reaffirming full support for the efforts of the League of Arab States, which are the only framework accepted by all.

On that basis, the delegation of Egypt, on behalf of the Arab Group and all sponsors of the draft resolution in New York, calls today on all Member States to stand shoulder to shoulder in sending a clear message of support to the Syrian people by voting in favour of the Arab draft resolution on the situation in Syria.

The Acting President: The Assembly shall now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/66/L.36.

I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/66/L.36, I should like to place on record the following statement on the financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure.

Under the terms of paragraph 11 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request

> "in this context, the Secretary-General and all relevant United Nations bodies to provide support to the efforts of the League of Arab States, both through good offices aimed at promoting a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis, including through the appointment of a Special Envoy, and through technical and material assistance, in consultation with the League of Arab States".

It is estimated that additional resources in the amount of $900,000 would be required for the initial six months in the biennium 2012-2013 to provide support to the efforts of the League of Arab States, both through good offices aimed at promoting a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis, including through the appointment of a special envoy, and through technical and material assistance.

These requirements would be met through the use of the commitment authority granted to the Secretary-General in resolution 66/249 for activities that the Secretary-General certifies as relating to the maintenance of peace and security. Any further requirements would be proposed for charging against the provision for special political missions approved by the General Assembly for the biennium 2012-2013 in the report to the General Assembly.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ja'afari (*Syrian Arab Republic*) (*spoke in Arabic*): Syria is currently working on three major issues. The first is our ongoing and immediate response to the just demands of the Syrian people for reform by following up on the accelerated implementation of a comprehensive reform programme. This response alone fully answers the substance of the statement made by my colleague, the representative of Egypt, in introducing draft resolution A/66/L.36. The difference between my brief description of that issue and the full statement made by my colleague from Egypt is to be found in the political intent of these words. I shall go into that immediately.

We note that the adoption of the new draft constitution for Syria shall be decided in a direct national referendum in 10 days, on 26 February. The draft constitution provides for the establishment of a modern, democratic Syrian State of citizenship, rule of law and equality among all citizens based on political pluralism, the separation of powers, the protection of public freedoms, and the democratic exercise of authority through the ballot box. These extremely important provisions respond to the genuine demands and aspirations of the people, be they members of the majority or the opposition.

Secondly, we shall continue to call in earnest for an immediate national dialogue among all Syrians who care for the security and future of their country, regardless of their political ideology and affiliations. This is the only way to resolve the painful events in Syria, fulfil the aspirations of the Syrian people, and

maintain the country's prestige as an effective actor in its geographic and Arab region.

We welcome all honest efforts to support that comprehensive national dialogue, including the Russian offer to host it in Moscow. We call on all Member States to encourage the national Syrian opposition to participate in the comprehensive national dialogue. We also call on those countries that are inciting the opposition not to take part in the national dialogue to desist and to persuade the opposition to distance itself from the armed terrorist groups that have taken up a new path to reform based on the destruction of oil and gas pipelines and trains, assassination and violence against public and private institutions and property.

Thirdly, we shall continue to undertake the responsibilities and duties of the Syrian State and to protect the Syrian people and its interests by maintaining the stability of the country and the security of its citizens from terrorism and the acts of violence of armed groups, in accordance with international and Syrian law. No country can accept the presence of armed terrorist groups on its territory or allow them to attack its institutions, private and public property, civilians or military personnel.

We have deep concerns vis-à-vis the real intentions of the sponsors of the draft resolution, in particular their aggressive political and media campaign against Syria; their provision of comprehensive logistical media, financial and political support to the armed terrorist groups; and securing them a voice in international forums. These countries have denied the existence of the armed terrorist groups since the current events began. While claiming their desire to spare Syrian lives and blood and to resolve the crisis in Syria peacefully, they have hastened to impose unilateral sanctions on the Syrian people outside the framework of international legitimacy, which have affected their day-to-day existence. They have also cut off relations with Syria without justification.

All of this clearly demonstrates that they have no desire to achieve any reform or proposal based on peaceful dialogue. They are instead a major part of the problem and the crisis. We call on them from this rostrum to stop interfering in Syrian domestic affairs and adding fuel to the fire of violence and sectarian strife among all Syrians without exception, including the opposition.

The draft resolution before us is an example par excellence of bias, and has nothing to do with events in Syria. The sponsors have rejected all negotiated amendments to the draft, including an invitation to the opposition to distance itself from armed groups. That in itself explains everything. They have no intention of assigning any responsibility whatsoever to the armed terrorist groups for launching terrorist attacks on State institutions and civilians; they do not even seek to condemn those attacks, including the suicide attacks in Damascus and Aleppo. They refuse to make any reference to the exclusive responsibility of the Syrian State to protect its citizens from these attacks. They have paid no heed to the serious reforms under way in Syria, including the new draft constitution.

Furthermore, the draft resolution refers to decisions and resolutions that are unbalanced and will only intensify the crisis. The resolutions adopted by the League of Arab States violate Syrian sovereignty, which is protected under the United Nations Charter and all international norms, and international law. I cite paragraph 9 of the most recent resolution adopted by the Arab League, which is referenced in the draft resolution. That resolution calls on League members to "provide [the Syrian opposition] with all forms of political and material support". That paragraph represents a clear official invitation to provide logistical support and weapons to the armed opposition and to encourage it to continue its terrorist attacks in Syria, including the suicidal attacks that have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians in Damascus and Aleppo. It is the very armed terrorist groups that have officially endorsed these attacks through the satellite channels of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its media that are to receive all material support pursuant to the League's resolution.

I deeply regret to say that never in my professional life of multilateral diplomacy have I heard of a similar resolution adopted by any international, governmental or regional organization calling for the provision of support to armed groups that commit terrorist attacks on civilians. We might assume that those organizations would be more interested in seeking ways to deal with these groups and organizations than in supporting them or giving them legitimacy and political and media cover.

The League of Arab States, which is supposedly a regional organization that promotes the interests and preserves the sovereignty of its members,

including Syria, is now — under the domination of the GCC — competing in every conspiratorial manner with the traditional enemies of the Arabs to smite Syria. Is it conceivable that the League of Arab States called for an international peacekeeping operation to be deployed to Syria? Is it conceivable that this invitation was rejected by some Western States that conspire against Syria?

In considering the situation of certain Arab countries following the so-called Arab Spring, we note that they are regrettably suffering violence on a daily basis that is far more vicious than events in my country. And yet, these developments receive little coverage in the media or attention from the countries that have provoked these unanticipated repercussions for Arab citizens. At the same time, these countries seek to plunder the resources of all Arab countries and to allow Israel, on behalf of Western interests in the region, to dominate the Middle East, squelch the Palestinian question, swallow the occupied Arab territories, and return the Arabs to the age of darkness once their oil and gas wealth and revenues have been usurped. They do all this to save the economies of Europe and the United States from the financial crisis that is smothering them.

We would hope that the United Nations and its Member States would support the Syrian Government and people in addressing the challenges of extremism and terrorism and in accelerating the serious reforms under way in the country. In that context, we draw the Assembly's attention to the danger that the Organization, under political pressure exerted by some Member States, may be used as a smokescreen for armed terrorist groups in Syria. The report issued by the Arab observer mission documented the criminal acts committed by those armed groups.

In that context, we would like to reiterate that a biased, non-objective resolution would only send the wrong message to all of those extremists and terrorists — the message that their acts of violence and deliberate sabotage have the support and encouragement of the States Members of the United Nations. Consequently, the adoption of such a resolution would only lead to an exacerbation of the crisis and to more violence in the region as a whole, rather than to a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

We would therefore appeal to all States, when the draft resolution is put to the vote, not to become indirectly parties to something that will only result in more chaos and intensify the crisis. We appeal to all members to vote against this draft resolution against Syria for all the reasons I have cited.

In conclusion, I would like to pose a question, and I would like each and every representative here to reflect on it. Did anyone think of the consequences of the destruction of Basra? This Arab proverb does not apply to the city of Basra in Iraq; it simply draws attention to what could happen if the draft resolution is adopted. That step would be disastrous not only for the region but for international relations as a whole.

Any reasonable person in this Hall is aware that the chaos in Arab countries has implications for regionanl and international peace and security. Did anyone consider the fact that the bloodshed in Syria and other countries only serves the interests of Israel and promotes its plans to kill the Palestinian question and redraw the geopolitical borders of the region, thereby dashing any hopes for a comprehensive and just peace in the region, including the hope of establishing a Palestinian State on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967?

The crux of the matter is that certain sponsors of the draft resolution would like to settle political accounts with Syria. This involves long-standing political issues with the West — old and new ones with respect to some Arab countries, unfortunately.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The principles of sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity are the very foundation of human coexistence in today's world, which is made up of nations that boast a rich political, cultural and religious diversity. These principles ensure peaceful coexistence and fraternity among the human beings who inhabit Mother Earth. These principles must therefore be scrupulously respected, and the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be an exception to that rule.

We denounce before the world the fact that imperial Powers and their allies are proposing to trigger regime change in Syria, even at the cost of further bloodshed. They want to use the same approach as the one taken in Libya, which had dire consequences for international peace and security. They are seeking to militarily occupy a sovereign country, carry out a coup d'état against its legitimate authorities, and turn Syria into a protectorate.

The imperial Powers and their allies, working in concert with the international media, which are at their service, would turn the city of Homs, Syria's Benghazi,

into the headquarters of armed groups operating with foreign support. The alleged goal of human rights protection in Homs and in other parts of the country is but a smokescreen to be used to violate the sovereignty of Syria and to promote civil war on a large scale.

The draft resolution (A/66/L.36) before us represents an intervention in the internal affairs of an independent State, as it sets forth various mechanisms for the mentoring and monitoring of a sovereign country. If the draft resolution is adopted, it will be used by the media to justify foreign military intervention in Syria.

The draft resolution attacks the Syrian Government. It calls for respect for human rights while failing to mention the ongoing proven human rights violations perpetrated by terrorist groups, which are committing heinous crimes against civilians and attacking State officials and facilities using weapons of all kinds.

The draft turns a blind eye to the initiatives of President Bashar Al-Assad and of Syrian State institutions to promote political dialogue with the opposition, which are aimed at achieving an inclusive, democratic and peaceful national agreement. It also ignores the call made by the Syrian Government for the holding of a referendum on 26 February on a new Constitution that would establish a political system based on the principle of political pluralism and the democratic exercise of power through elections. The exercise of democracy and popular elections are the best options for moving towards the creation of a political, democratic and pluralistic system in which all citizens are equal, regardless of their affiliations, ethnicity or beliefs.

The draft resolution denies the Syrian State its right to protect its population and to ensure internal peace and security. The draft asks it to give up the privileges granted by the Constitution for ensuring the stability of the country. The draft does not call for — as proposed in the amendment submitted by the Russian Federation — "all sections of the Syrian opposition to dissociate themselves from armed groups engaged in acts of violence", nor does it urge "Member States and all those in a position to do so to use their influence to prevent continued violence by such groups".

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela recognizes the commendable efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation to bring the content of the draft resolution closer to a balanced and objective text, which has not been achieved. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supports the initiatives of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, which have prevented the Security Council from being used to violate the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela therefore supports the peace efforts made by the Russian Federation in Damascus through their Minister Sergey Lavrov. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela hopes that those efforts are supported by the countries that truly desire a negotiated, peaceful and inclusive solution in Syria. Dialogue among the Syrians should be encouraged. It is not desirable that the logic of war that the imperialists wish to impose on Syria and the world prevails.

The General Assembly, which is today discussing the possibility of invading a sovereign country, should rather be concerned with the full recognition of the Palestinian State, Israel's ongoing violations of the rights of the Arab people and how to implement the resolution ordering the Government of the United States to suspend the criminal blockade against the heroic sister Republic of Cuba.

For these reasons, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, under the leadership of Hugo Chávez Frías, will vote against draft resolution A/66/L.36 before us.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Before voting, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to clarify its position on three dimensions.

First, any issue related to a United Nations Member State should be discussed strictly on the basis of the principle of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of United Nations Member States. The Syrian Arab Republic is a full-fledged member of the United Nations and, therefore, is no exception.

Secondly, the use of violence against the Syrian Republic and innocent people should be stopped immediately and simultaneously and all elements of instability should similarly be removed.

Thirdly, the question of the Syrian Arab Republic should be settled in the best interests of the Syrian people. The fate and future of Syria are in the hands of the Syrian people. Therefore, the process of stability and peace should strictly be a peaceful and Syrian-led process through dialogue and negotiation without any outside interference.

In view of that principled position, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will vote against draft resolution A/66/L.36.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): The Government and people of Grenada, a peace-loving people, extend our sincere condolences to all the Syrian families who have lost their loved ones on the sad events under consideration here.

Grenada believes that, at all times, the United Nations must do the right thing, according to the letter and the spirit of our Charter, and we must be seen to be doing so.

Regarding draft resolution A/66/L.36, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", Grenada places on record that it is our understanding that the draft resolution will do only what it says, namely, to provide diplomatic support to Syria, the Arab League and the Secretary-General in order to help the Government and people of Syria end all bloodshed and find an agreed solution to the internal situation.

Grenada understands that in and with this draft resolution, the General Assembly is not voting on or for a resolution that directly or indirectly or through interpretation or reinterpretation can be used as the basis for the removal of a Government, military intervention or other acts against the Charter of the United Nations in letter or in spirit. With that understanding, and naturally with a prayer and a hope, Grenada will vote for the draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/66/L.36, entitled "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.36, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, Estonia, Germany, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Micronesia, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Palau, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Acting President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Zambia

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Cameroon, Comoros, Fiji, Lebanon, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam

Draft resolution A/66/L.36 was adopted by 137 votes to 12, with 17 abstentions (resolution 66/253).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Burundi and the Comoros advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In order to resolve the Syrian crisis, there is a need to uphold two principles to which no one seems to object. The violence must be stopped by all sides, and the necessary solutions can be found only through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process.

Resolution 66/253, "The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic", submitted by the Group of Arab States today, does not meet these criteria. To a large extent, it reflects the worrisome trend of attempts to isolate the Syrian leadership, reject any contact with it, and impose an external formula for a political settlement.

In order to make the sponsors' text more balanced, the Russian Federation had proposed several amendments. The most important amendment placed non-contentious and reasonable demands on all opposition forces to disassociate themselves from the armed groups carrying out acts of violence and on those groups themselves to cease their attacks on residential areas and State institutions, just as Government forces must stop shelling towns and withdraw from populated areas. However, our amendments were not taken into account. In these circumstances, the Russian Federation had no other choice than to vote against the resolution.

The Russian Federation will continue its unf' gging efforts to help Syria emerge from the crisis in cooperation with all those who regard the interests of the Syrian people, regional peace and security to be of paramount importance.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese Government consistently pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and is committed to upholding regional and world peace and stability. China has followed closely developments in the situation in Syria and is deeply worried about the escalating crisis there, which has caused civilian casualties and affected peace and stability in the Middle East.

We condemn all acts of violence against innocent civilians and urge the Government and all political factions in Syria to immediately and fully end all acts of violence and quickly restore stability and normal social order. We call on the Government of Syria to pay serious heed to the peoples' legitimate desire for reform and development. We call on the various political factions in Syria to express their political aspirations through non-violent means under the rule of law.

We urge all parties concerned in Syria to immediately launch inclusive political dialogue without preconditions and jointly discuss a comprehensive political reform plan and mechanism. We call for the holding of a referendum on the new draft constitution and parliamentary elections at an early date, the establishment of a national unity Government with the participation of various factions, and the full implementation of the reform plan on this basis.

We understand the concerns of Arab countries and the League of Arab States and their desire to seek a quick solution to the Syrian issue. We value the important role of Arab countries and the League of Arab States in seeking a political solution to the issue of Syria. We appreciate the efforts of Arab countries and the League of Arab States to find a political solution to the Syrian issue. We support the position of Arab countries that the violence should end immediately, that Syrian civilians should be effectively protected, that humanitarian assistance should be extended to Syria, and that external military intervention should be avoided. We hope that the Syrian issue will be resolved within the framework of the League of Arab States through political and peaceful means.

We believe that the international community should fully respect Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, the independent choice of the Syrian people, and the outcome of political dialogue among the various Syrian parties. We do not approve of armed intervention or forcing a so-called regime change

in Syria. We do not believe that sanctions or the threat of sanctions are helpful to achieving an appropriate solution. The actions of the international community and the United Nations on the issue of Syria should help to ease tensions, facilitate political dialogue and resolve differences. Such actions, instead of complicating the issue, should contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East and upholding the unity of the international community. China voted in accordance with this position.

China is a responsible country and a friend of the Arab people. China has always followed the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations. China takes an objective, just and responsible stance on the issue of Syria. China is willing to maintain communications with the Government and various political factions of Syria, as well as with the Arab countries and the League of Arab States. China will work with the international community and play a positive and constructive role to appropriately resolve the issue of Syria.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): The Republic of Serbia voted in favor of resolution 66/253. We believe that all international efforts should be inspired solely by the desire to put an end to the suffering of the people of Syria. We appreciate and respect the efforts made by the League of Arab States and the Group of Arab States.

We would have wished to see the proposals and amendments offered by some countries considered and evaluated, because we appreciate and welcome all the diplomatic efforts that have been made so far to help ease the Syrian crisis. We believe in particular that the resolution would have been enriched by some of the amendments submitted by the Russian Federation. These amendments, in our view, are truly constructive and could have led to the adoption of the resolution by consensus.

We hope that the international community will take these amendments into consideration in the future diplomatic process. Their content cannot be avoided, and sooner or later will need to be addressed. The Republic of Serbia believes that all initiatives directed at stopping the bloodshed in Syria and creating an atmosphere in which serious talks about the arrangements that would bring stability in Syria are most welcome.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Pakistan has acceded to the collective wisdom of our brothers in the Arab world and voted in favour of resolution 66/253. We share the concerns of the international community on the situation in Syria. Continued violence and bloodshed cannot be condoned. We strongly condemn the use of force against peaceful protestors and the human rights violations committed by all sides. We feel that all efforts have to be geared towards breaking the spiral of violence in Syria and enabling the legitimate aspirations of the people to be heard and channelled for the sake of the peace, prosperity and stability of the country. Haste often leads to waste, and is historically contrary to the principles of tried and tested diplomacy.

There is a general consensus within the international community on two of the main objectives: an immediate end to the violence and killing, and a peaceful resolution of the situation through an inclusive political process. There are some differences, however, on how to operationalize these objectives. Pakistan has stressed the importance of a consensual approach to the issue, including in the Security Council, for only a unified message could help to promote our common objectives.

We feel that we are very close to arriving at such common ground in the Security Council. There could have been greater efforts to bridge the gaps by accommodating the amendments proposed by Russia and China and, for the sake of world peace, to achieve greater consensus in the Assembly. Our position in the Security Council was based on the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the non-use of foreign military intervention. Even today, we stand by those principles.

We call on both sides to shun violence, pursue the path of dialogue and reconciliation, and engage in a results-oriented and inclusive political process leading to a peaceful resolution of the problem. We have always urged that any discussion of Syria at the United Nations take place in full cognizance of and respect for the principles of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of that country. We continue to believe that the objectives of peace and security can best be served by pursuing a cooperative approach with the country. We therefore reiterate our earlier calls for respect for the will of the Syrian people and for a Syrian-led solution to the ongoing unrest.

All remonstrances aside, there is growing apprehension and anxiety in the Islamic world as another Muslim country faces ingress at the hands of

the United Nations. We must not allow this to become a belief; this growing trend must cease.

Let me conclude by committing our continued support to the collective efforts of the League of Arab States aimed at ending the violence and promoting a peaceful resolution of the problem through dialogue and engagement.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica expresses its deepest concern over the grave, repeated and massive violations of human rights in Syria, in particular the deaths and suffering of thousands of civilians and others protected under international law, and the growing dangers faced by the people of that country. The international community cannot remain silent in the face of the violations described by the commission of inquiry, which has earned our full confidence.

We vehemently call on the Syrian authorities to put a definitive halt to the execution and persecution of protestors and champions of human rights, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, reprisals, torture and attacks on the civilian population. We also condemn sexual violence and the violations of the human rights of boys and girls, as described in the report of the Human Rights Council (see A/66/53/Add.2). Earlier this week, we also listened with great interest to the briefing of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the General Assembly on the situation in Syria (see A/66/PV.95). We express our deep concern over the ongoing deterioration of the situation.

My country believes that all actors in the international community should play a role in this serious and grave situation, pursuant to their respective competences. We note the leadership and responsible engagement of the League of Arab States in the search for solutions to the crisis. The many decisions adopted by that organization on this matter should be implemented, including its plan of action. To that end, it is imperative that the Syrian authorities consistently and seriously to cooperate with that mechanism and to comply with existing and future resolutions of the Human Rights Council.

The Human Rights Council has also fulfilled its responsibilities by holding three special sessions, and in particular by adopting resolution S-18/1, which we endorse as a member of the Council. The Human Rights Council, as the highest human rights body of the United Nations, has tools available to it that we must continue using in the session that will begin on 27 February. We therefore endorse the appointment of a special rapporteur. That is one of the mandates conferred upon the Human Rights Council, and as members we should act accordingly.

Given the prominent role of the Human Rights Council, its technical capacity and its ability to visit the field in situations of human rights violations that are serious enough to require country-specific consideration, Costa Rica has on this occasion maintained its traditional position of not co-sponsoring such resolutions in the General Assembly.

Nevertheless, we call the Assembly's attention to the fact that, given the seriousness of the findings of the commission of inquiry, the Human Rights Council itself, in paragraph 19 of resolution S-18/1, transmitted to the Secretary-General its report for appropriate action and transmission to all relevant United Nations bodies. Despite that, the Security Council failed to respond in a timely manner to this grave situation with respect to crimes against humanity, which are a threat to peace and security.

Working with the other countries of the so-called group of five small nations, we have expressed our concern about the use of a veto by two permanent members of the Security Council on 4 February (see S/PV.6711). We have reiterated our call for the veto not to be used in situations relating to genocide, crime against humanity, ethnic cleansing or war crimes.

There is an urgent need for reform to democratize the Security Council, to guarantee greater plurality in decision-making, and to limit privileges. In these circumstances, we carefully studied the resolution introduced by the Group of Arab States under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict". We believe that it is an appropriate response to the gravity of the crisis and, given our deep concern for the situation in Syria, we voted in favour of it.

Although we attach high value to consensus, consensus-seeking cannot and should not paralyse our action, or weaken the Organization's ability to send a strong message when confronted with unacceptable events such as those before us.

The Security Council still has time to fulfil the important responsibilities conferred upon it by the international community. Political concerns cannot be put above the highest priority of protecting human

life and integrity by sending a forceful and unanimous message and taking the measures that are necessary to achieve peace and security and that have a true impact in the field. Those responsible for these acts should answer to the relevant courts, and the Security Council should take specific measures to achieve that goal, including referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court.

Finally, we firmly urge all the various international and national actors to make every possible effort to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict. All parties involved should seek a solution through dialogue and prevent by all means possible further violence against the civilian population. The decision as to how they will organize their Government and institutions is up to the Syrian people alone. Voices of change cannot be silenced with violence. The clamour of the people should be heard and respected.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): Ukraine voted in favour of resolution 66/253. The position of the delegation of Ukraine on the resolution presented by the Group of Arab States is a continuation of our stance on the relevant resolution (A/C.3/66/L.57/Rev.1) adopted last November by a large majority in the Third Committee.

We proceed from the reality that countries of the region that are striving for peace and want to bring an end to the violence in their neighbourhood are in the best position to reach these goals. Therefore, in our view, the peaceful efforts of the League of Arab States aimed at a negotiated settlement deserve the support of the Assembly.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, in a statement dated 10 February, expressed great concern at the escalating violence in Syria, which threatens to grow into a full-scale civil war with unpredictable consequences for the entire Middle East. Ukraine urges all parties of the internal Syrian confrontation to cease violence and to start a dialogue with the aim of finding acceptable and effective ways of resolving their differences.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted against resolution 66/253, in line with our principled position that addressing the legitimate demands of the people through a peaceful and domestically led political process and free from foreign intervention is the only way out of a crisis. In the case of Syria, any attempt to interfere in Syrian internal affairs would only lead to the deepening of a political and social crisis, with all its ramifications for the region as a whole. Our goal, therefore, should be focused on a process that leads to strengthening national unity and ensuring public order, national security and the stability and prosperity of the Syrian people, while bearing in mind that the primary and ultimate responsibility for the safety, security and stability of the Syrian people lies with the people and Government of Syria.

We regret that the whole process of calling a meeting of the General Assembly to debate the situation in Syria did not go through the proper procedures. Furthermore, with regard to the lack of consultation even with the members of the General Committee in convening the meeting, there is an inconsistency in the agenda item under which the debate is taking place. While the recent meeting of the General Assembly on this issue (A/66/PV.96) was convened under agenda item 64, "Report of the Human Rights Council", the resolution adopted today is under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict". Discussing the situation of an armed conflict in a given country and the ways and means to prevent it has legal and political implications. We strongly believe that such a situation does not apply to the case of Syria. We very much suspect that attributing the situation of Syria to that category may notonly not help us to resolve the internal political dispute, but also would further complicate the situation.

Even if we accept that the Syrian situation should be discussed under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict", that is one side of the coin. But the other side of the coin is that if the issue is considered under armed conflict, it means that we explicitly recognize that there are armed groups in Syria fighting the Government, committing violence and destroying public buildings and infrastructure. The question now arises from where and which sources those groups obtained their arms and sophisticated equipment.

What is more regrettable, however, is that the sponsors of the resolution chose not to accommodate any amendments to it, whereas their acceptance could have made the resolution more balanced and comprehensive and more adapted to the real situation on the ground in Syria. The amendments called for "all sections of the Syrian opposition to dissociate themselves from armed groups engaged in acts of violence" and highlighted the importance of armed groups stopping their attacks against State institutions and quarters of the cities and towns.

Those are key issues in the resolution of the crisis in Syria. As long as armed groups continue to resort to violence, the crisis would obviously continue. We should be clear and steadfast in condemning any act of violence and terrorism in any form and manifestation. Foreign interference, acts of violence and incitement to terrorism would pour more oil on the fire.

As we have stated before, Syria has historically played an important role in the Middle East. Therefore, prolonged instability and unrest in Syria would have adverse consequences for peace and stability in the Middle East region. I would like to make it clear that destabilizing the Middle East and promoting violence in the region eventually serve the best interests of the Zionist regime and its criminal acts against humanity, Muslims and the Arab world.

We should all work together for a comprehensive, effective and practical way to help a peaceful resolution of the present crisis in Syria. The resolution in its present wording would not lead us to that goal. That is why we voted against it.

Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia also voted against resolution 66/253 that the General Assembly has just adopted. That is why we would like to take this opportunity to explain the reasons for our decision.

We would like to begin by first asking what is happening is Syria. Is there an embryonic civil war? Or perhaps it is an armed crushing of a civil uprising or maybe a clash between the regular Syrian army and armed forces organized by the opposition? Is there perhaps genocide in Syria? Those are some of the questions that we asked before taking a decision.

We must admit that we do not have an exact answer. We know only that there is a recognized opposition and also a Government open to reform. In the words of the Ambassador of Syria to the United Nations, we heard that it is a Government that is ready to make changes, to alter its Constitution and to lead the Syrian political process towards a democracy.

However, we cannot be sure about that because we know that it is an ongoing process that has still not shown its definitive traits. Nevertheless, we know the dangers of an exacerbation of the situation. We are aware of the possibility of a power vacuum and a sectarian or religious struggle. And we are aware, above all, of the possibility of the entire region of the Middle East ending up destabilized, as has happened in earlier conflicts.

What the Bolivarian delegation knows is that the Syrian problem can have two outcomes. One is the outcome implemented in Libya — the formula facilitated by the United Nations last year. That involves legitimizing a foreign intervention into a country embroiled in conflict and, after legitimizing that violence through a United Nations resolution — in the case of Libya Security Council resolution 1973 (2011) — justifying regime change and disruption of the civilian order in that country.

We witnessed that outcome, and it seems that we did not learn a lesson. It appears that we are ready to repeat the same mistakes as last year, turning the United Nations into a platform to legitimize a foreign intervention. The difference is that last year, it was the Security Council and today, it appears to be the General Assembly that will ultimately allow that step to be taken.

We hope that, indeed, as the Ambassador of Grenada said, this resolution will not make it possible to implement the formula that we saw last year. But we have serious doubts about that. That is why we voted against the resolution.

However, we also envisage a second outcome, which is not the one outlined above. That is a peaceful transition, which we also witnessed a year ago in Egypt and Tunisia. The Arab Spring was based on a principle of peaceful tools of dissent in order to, to some extent, guide a return to democracy and, possibly, regime change, but through the popular will of its citizens without allowing a foreign intervention. We think that that first breath of the Arab Spring should blow hard in Syria and sincerely believe that the Government of Syria could take steps in that direction. We would therefore not want the United Nations instead to be tempted to move quickly and once again implement the Libya formula, which seems to us inappropriate.

For that reason, Bolivia would have supported the amendments that yesterday the Russian delegation wanted to submit to the draft resolution. We think that the Russian Federation's amendments would have helped the resolution to truly enjoy the consensus that we all hoped, above all when we are talking of the General Assembly, where there are no greater or lesser

countries and where no one has the right to veto the decision of the majority.

This year, Bolivia will have had 30 years of uninterrupted democracy with unlimited respect for human rights. Bolivia has also lived through difficult times of conflict in the past and is not insensitive to violence. Furthermore, Bolivia supports the victims of the violence in Syria, but will not on that account overlook the fact that in many cases the United Nations has made mistakes. We must remember that.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina voted in favour of resolution 66/253 and would like to point out the following issues relating to how this matter was handled.

First, it is of the utmost importance to make every possible effort to guarantee comprehensive, unrestricted respect for human rights in Syria. The Syrian Government is responsible for complying with that exigency.

Secondly, it is necessary to preserve the right to free association, political participation and social protest of the Syrian people as a whole, without any repression that seeks to restrict the effective exercising of their rights.

Finally, Argentina is convinced that this crisis should be resolved in the context of dialogue, negotiation and the democratic participation of all sectors without interference or plans for military intervention by foreign Powers.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in March last year, India has been concerned about its implications within and outside Syria. We have been mindful of the important role that the Syrian Arab Republic has historically played in the Middle East. We think that prolonged instability and unrest in Syria have serious implications for peace and stability in the wider region. We have therefore, since the beginning of the protests, called for a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sections of Syrian society.

We strongly condemn all violence, irrespective of whoever the perpetrators are. We also condemn all violations of human rights. India holds the rights to free expression and peaceful assembly among the fundamental values that should be respected, while ensuring the stability and security of society. India has conveyed this message to the Syrian leadership, both bilaterally and with its partners in the India, Brazil and South Africa group. We have impressed upon the Syrian side the urgent need to abjure violence and pay heed to the aspirations of the people of Syria. This message was also contained in the statement of the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2011/16, issued in August 2011 under India's presidency.

Unfortunately, the situation has continued to deteriorate. We have also witnessed several terrorist attacks in different parts of the country. Resort to violence by all sides in the crisis remains unabated. We are firmly of the view that a political process to resolve the present crisis should be led by the Syrians themselves. We believe that the main role of the international community, including the Assembly, is to facilitate the engagement of the Syrian Government with all sectors of Syrian society for an inclusive political process, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians while ensuring respect for the country's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The League of Arab States, as an important regional organization, should play its required and historic role in promoting political dialogue among the Syrian parties. Our support for resolution 66/253, adopted today, is in accordance with our support for the efforts of the Arab League to find a peaceful resolution of the crisis through a Syrian-led inclusive political process.

I would, however, like to express our regret at the procedure followed in the Assembly during the week spent discussing the situation in Syria. Exceptions to established procedures are best avoided in order to maintain the credibility of any institution. Also, it would do us immense good if there were greater readiness on the part of all quarters to negotiate a text with a view to reaching consensus.

My delegation notes that the resolution just adopted expressly reaffirms that all countries should refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, and from acting in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The resolution also condemns all violence, irrespective of where it comes from, and calls for serious political dialogue between the Syrian Government and the whole spectrum of the opposition under the auspices of the League of Arab States. We believe that the leadership of Syria is a matter for the Syrian people to decide. We call on

all opposition forces in Syria to peacefully engage in constructive dialogue with the authorities.

In this connection, we have noted the decision of the Syrian leadership to hold a referendum on a new draft constitution on 26 February and to organize multi-party elections within next three months. We hope that this decision will create a new environment for peace and facilitate a political process.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): Singapore voted in favour of resolution 66/253 because it is clearly not a politically motivated country-specific human rights resolution of the type that is too common in the Third Committee. By contrast, the resolution clearly deals with a unique and extraordinary emergency.

Singapore calls on the Government of Syria to immediately cease all violence against its own citizens. We call upon the Syrian Government to work with all parties, including the League of Arab States and the United Nations, to end the violence and resolve the situation peacefully.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): Viet Nam has been closely following developments in Syria, and we are particularly concerned by reports of increasing violence, instability and loss of public order, which seriously affect the right of the Syrian people. We join in the international community's call on all parties concerned in Syria to exercise self-restraint, end the violence and find a political solution through constructive dialogue and national reconciliation, in conformity with the aspirations of the Syrian people.

Viet Nam supports the position, espoused by many countries, upholding respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, especially the principles of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, as well as the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the guarantee of the right to self-determination of the Syrian people. Therefore, it is important that this process be determined by the Syrian people.

We also support the efforts of the international community, including those of the League of Arab States, in contributing constructively to the early restoration of stability, dialogue towards national reconciliation, and the promotion of peace in Syria so that the Syrian people are able to devote themselves to national reconstruction and development.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile voted in favour of resolution 66/253. The General Assembly has raised its voice to resoundingly condemn the systematic and massive violations of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, such as the use of force against civilians; arbitrary executions; assassinations; the persecution of protestors, human rights activists and journalists; arbitrary detentions; forced disappearances; torture; and sexual violence, including against children.

The serious events that have been denounced, as well as those reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, cannot go unpunished.The rule of law should become a reality, and those responsible for grave violations of human rights, including those that could constitute crimes against humanity, should be brought to justice.

The Government of Chile once again calls on the Government of Syria to put an end to the brutality and to open realistic pathways to dialogue with the opposition, and for the Syrian people to be allowed to choose their own destiny in a peaceful climate free of violence. In addition, channels must be opened for the international community to provide necessary aid to the victims of the humanitarian crisis that has been emerged.

Finally, Chile reiterates its support for the efforts of the League of Arab States to reach a solution to the crisis in Syria, which represent the importance that regional organizations attach to the search for a solution to the conflict.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): The delegation of Bangladesh voted in favour of resolution 66/253, entitled "Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic". Bangladesh maintains a principled position of generally abstaining on human rights resolutions calling for action against any State Member of the United Nations. However, we voted in favour as an exception in order to end the bloodshed and misery of the Syrian people.

We must mention that the convening of the meeting of the General Assembly to consider the report of the Human Rights Council (A/66/53/Add.2) at this time of year was not procedurally correct. It contravenes paragraph 6 of resolution 65/281. Bangladesh hopes that this will truly be an exception without any recurrence.

Bangladesh has closely examined the resolution and notes that, unlike the usual country-specific resolutions, it was submitted by the League of Arab States under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. It follows

several actions by the Arab League to bring peace and stability to Syria and to promote a Syrian-led political transition. Bangladesh notes with satisfaction that the resolution, in its condemnation of violence, addresses all parties in Syria, including armed groups. We would have appreciated it if the amendment of the Russian Federation could have been accommodated.

Bangladesh strongly believes that any action in Syria should be led only by the Syrian Government through a constructive dialogue that enjoys its full consent with respect for the national sovereignty, unity and integrity of Syria. The proposed observer mission of the Arab League and the appointment of a special envoy of the Secretary-General for a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis would, we hope, initiate a process of peaceful dialogue and engagement with all concerned in Syria.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The international community has clearly expressed its opinion and its message has been conveyed to everybody. The Arab Group and all 72 sponsors of resolution 66/253 were bolstered in their resolve by the large number of sponsors. The resolution, which reaffirms the need for a peaceful solution to the crisis as part of the League of Arab States initiative, enjoyed significant and overwhelming support. The 137 votes in favour of the resolution confirms that prognosis and sends the unambiguous message to the Syrian regime that it is high time to listen to the voice of its people. It is high time to immediately, fully and faithfully implement the relevant initiatives and decisions of the League of Arab States in order to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. That peaceful solution should remain in the hands of the Arabs in the context of the initiative of the Arab League, which is the only acceptable context available.

We all know that the situation in Syria is deteriorating. The situation is extremely serious and there must be no hesitation or delay. Everybody must focus on the crisis of the Syrian people and the attainment of their legitimate aspirations to a free life within a democratic context. That can be achieved only through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process as part of the Arab League initiative. We must avert a further deterioration in the situation that could have dramatic humanitarian repercussions and a negative impact on the stability of the entire region.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Arab Group and all the sponsors of the resolution, I would like to thank all the members who voted in favour. This is a first step forward on a path that we will resolutely pursue with the support and leadership of the League of Arab States and the international community to bring an end to the Syrian crisis and to fulfil the legitimate aspirations and hopes of the Syrian people.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I did not wish to take the floor a second time, but having listened to the statement made by the representative of Egypt, I should like to make some concluding remarks.

First, I should like to reassure my colleague, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt, and all other members of the League of Arab States that the Arab Trojan horse has been unmasked today and that the role of the League of Arab States must come to an end. The Western sponsors of resolution 66/253 have used the League of Arab States as a bridge, opening the way to internationalize the situation in Syria and to take the Syria file to the Security Council once again. That was the role demanded of the League of Arab States. I tell its members that the League's role must end today. The League has been depleted in that regrettable and suspect role.

Secondly, the League of Arab States no longer exists, having been kidnapped by the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Syria has left the League of Arab States, albeit temporarily. The League is broken within, politically and morally.

Thirdly, following its plot against us today, I wish good luck to the Arab League in implementing the tasks entrusted to it by Israel. I congratulate the League on its new alliance with Israel and the historic enemies of Syria.Syria has always defended all Arabs, expecting nothing in return. Syria has always defended all Arabs, expecting nothing in return. Today, we do not wish them to stand by us following their shameful position in the international community. All we want from them today, now that the Arab League Trojan horse has been unmasked, is to save whatever face and dignity they have left and to cease and desist in their plotting against

Egypt, Libya, the Sudan, Algeria, Yemen, and maybe more to come.

The wealth of all the Gulf Cooperation Council will be squandered on reckless and doomed adventures. That price will be borne by all the Arabs. All the Arabs will be used as free fuel to achieve the objectives of the West and Israel. As I have said, the issue is the settlement of political accounts with Syria and its regional and Arab role and its alliances in service of Arab and Islamic causes. Had there been the very minimum of credibility among some sponsors the resolution, they would have accepted the Russian amendments. They would have encouraged the national dialogue. They would have ceased providing weapons and media and political cover to the armed groups.

Finally, it is also truly regrettable that the United Nations — which is interested primarily in maintaining international peace and security and enshrining the purposes and principles of its Charter — has for some time now been sending the false message that it is acceptable to violate the sovereignty of Member States and invade them, and viable to exert political pressure on Member States to change their policies and agendas.

If things continue in this manner, the United Nations will collapse, first morally and then politically and legally. We will have thus destroyed an organization that has been a major forum for multilateral political and legal action for the past 66 years. That will be the final result. That will be the harvest of those who sow the seeds of intervention in the internal affairs of Member States.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.